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F O R T U N E S W A S H E D A W A Y

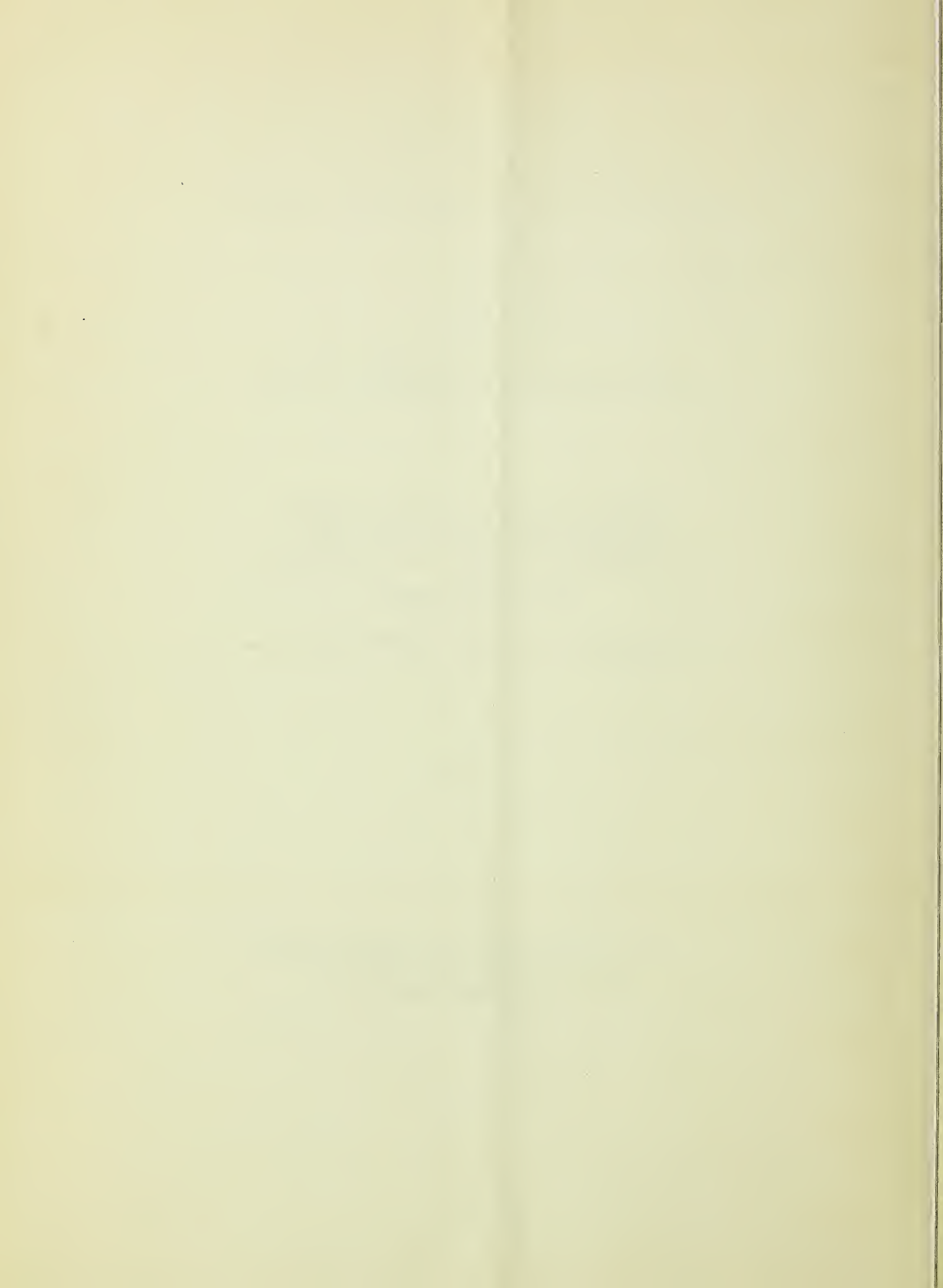
"REFORESTATION IN MUSKEGON COUNTY"

Broadcast No. 31 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

November 26, 1938 6:00-6:15 p.m.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

As the great Northwest Territory developed, white men battled for riches in the state of Michigan, riches surpassing the Eldorados of Mexico and Peru--forest riches. In early days, a mantle of great white pines covered the whole Muskegon River drainage. Today, the Muskegon drainage area has left only a few remnants of its former timber wealth. The fur trade, the logging weather, are but memories.

ORGAN: THEY CUT DOWN THE OLD PINE TREE.

ANNOUNCER

In 1881, Muskegon County was enjoying the greatest prosperity it had ever known. Lumbermen were striving for production, production, more production. Fifty mills were operating. The average annual cut, 650 million board feet, would be enough to floor a highway reaching from Maine to California...

SOUND: Dance hall scene, with occasional shouts, uproarious laughter, clinking of glasses, and music blaring.

BROOKS

Ah, there you are, Merrill. How goes it?

MERRILL

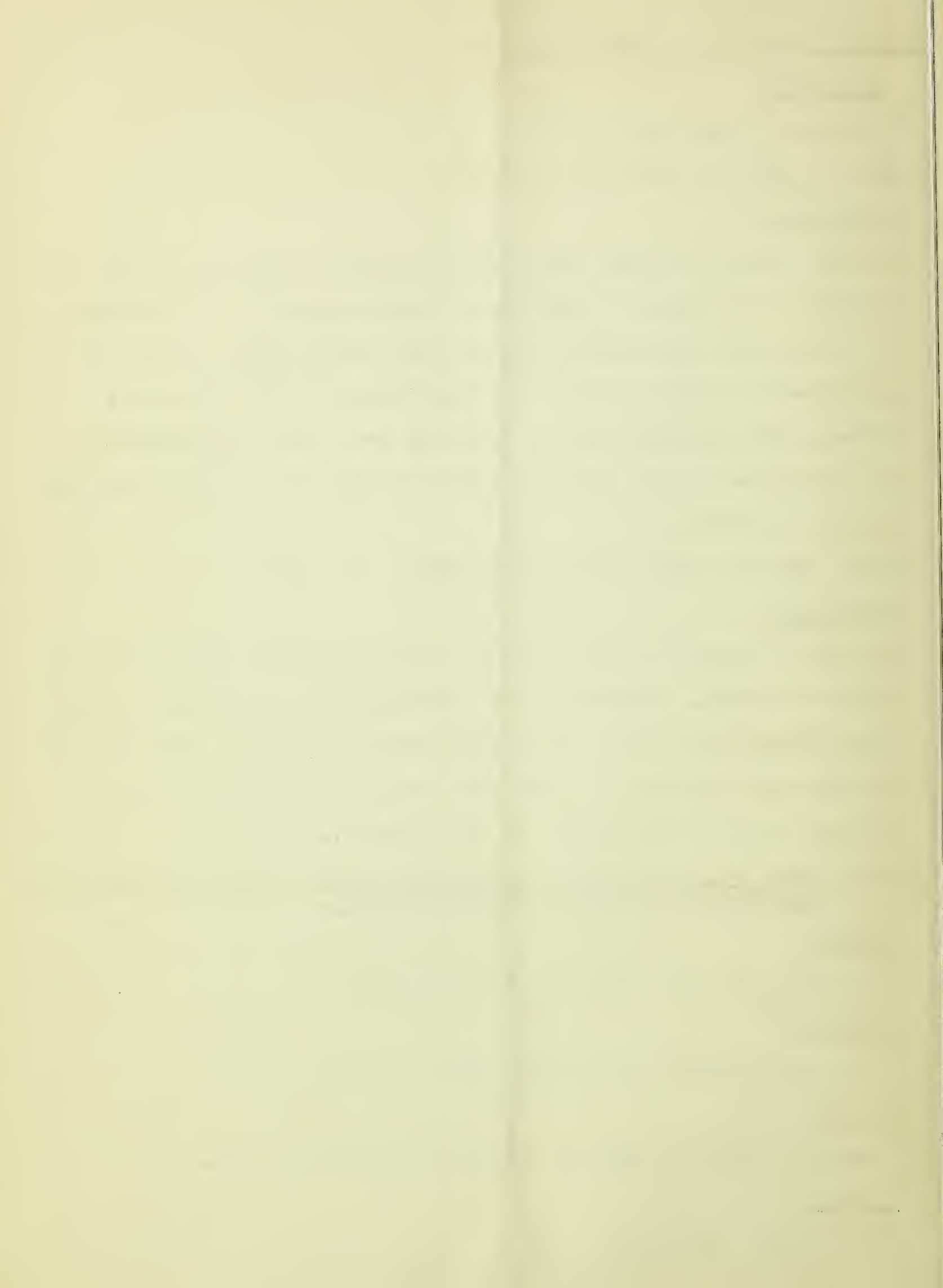
Very good, Brooks, very good. Have a drink.

BROOKS

Thanks....all the boys are having a big time tonight.

MERRILL

Sure, sure. Pay day.



BROOKS

Won't be long before all your timber will be gone, will it?

MERRILL

No, another year'll about finish it. Gettin' good prices this year, though.

BROOKS

Yeah, mighty good. Course, there's an awful lot of lumber going down the river, but there's plenty more farther up.

MERRILL

Sure. No man living today will see the end of lumber business in the valley.

BROOKS

Guess not. I reckon Muskegon can easily lay claim to being the greatest lumber producing city in these here United States...

MERRILL

...or the world! That's what I hear, anyhow. Oh, howdy there, Peck. Sit down.

SOUND: Chair scraping.

MERRILL

There--pour yourself a drink.

PECK

Don't mind if I do. Ah!.....Say, Merrill, I was out past that logging camp on your land today. Looks like you're about cleaned out.

MERRILL

Sure am. Man, alive. I wish I had another piece of land like that.

BROOKS

You mean, like it was.



MERRILL

That's what I aimed to say.

PECK

Well, it sure looks sorry now. What d'ya plan to do with it?

MERRILL

Sell it, I suppose. I think I can get \$1.50 an acre for it. It ought to be good for something, even with the pine gone.

PECK

I don't know. This land around here's awful sandy. I noticed how it's blowing over there in that old log road.

BROOKS

Don't suppose you can farm it, do you?

MERRILL

Me farm it? Man, I'm going to look for more timber.

BROOKS

Me and Merrill was just talking about this pine timber. We figure there's plenty left here in the valley.

PECK

It's going awful fast. And this is tree land, too, and nothing else. Why, when I came to Muskegon I couldn't find but two fellers who had enough faith in the soil to even plant a few potatoes in the garden.

BROOKS

Yeah, I heard a man over by Ravenna say the soil was so light that a warranty deed wouldn't hold it.



PECK

Why, every step you take, you step on nothing but pine knots and sand. The trees are going--and I tell you, this ain't nothing but tree land!

ORGAN: THEY CUT DOWN THE OLD PINE TREE.

ANNOUNCER

But those who thought the abundant forests would forever withstand the onslaught of the axe and the saw were wrong. The forests disappeared, and Muskegon's great lumber industry disappeared with them. Fortunately for the city, progressive and alert businessmen brought new industries, and Muskegon continued to grow. Fruit came in to take the place of the vanished pines, and for a time Muskegon County was second in the state in fruit production. But shifting sands continued to present a problem. In 1925, County Agricultural Agent Carl H. Knopf called a meeting of farmers...

SOUND: Hubbub of voices.

PEARSON

Hey, here comes Knopf now.

SOUND: Mingled greetings.

BARD

You're not more than an hour late, Carl.

SOUND: Laughter and conversation.

KNOPF

Sorry, I got held up at the office on that rat poison question. Shall we get started?

BARD

Been waiting this long, haven't we?

SOUND: Laughter, then subdued.



KNOFF

Most of you know from the letters that I sent just what this meeting's for. It's what to do about this sand land. What's your idea, Pearson?

PEARSON

Give it back to the Indians. (laughter)

BARD

Carl, it looks to me like, since this was pine land in the first place, we ought to farm the good land, and put the poor land back to pines.

PEARSON

Now, wait a minute. I don't think this land will grow pines.

BARD

Why not?

FARMER (in back of room)

I'll tell you why. We used to grow pine here, but it's not here now, so it just won't grow. That's why.

KNOFF

I believe it will. This whole thing is just a question of land use. Of course, we don't want to go into it on too big a scale at first. I would like to see some of you try it, though.

FARMER

You've got to show me.

PEARSON

Me too.



KNOPF

It stands to reason that this way, we'll make use of land that's otherwise worthless. We'll control this wind erosion. And we'll produce a valuable crop, a crop that will increase in value each year...

BARD

Yes, and the land will increase in value every year.

KNOPF

That's right, Adolph. And it'll certainly beautify the country. If some of you fellows want to try it, I think I can get you the trees at cost.

BARD

You can count me in on it, Carl.

SOUND: (Voices of "me too," "you've got to show me first," etc.)

KNOPF

All right. Let's start off on a small scale. Suppose we set a goal for the first year of, say, 15 of you planting 20 acres. That'd take around 20 or 25 thousand trees.

SOUND: (Shouts of approval)

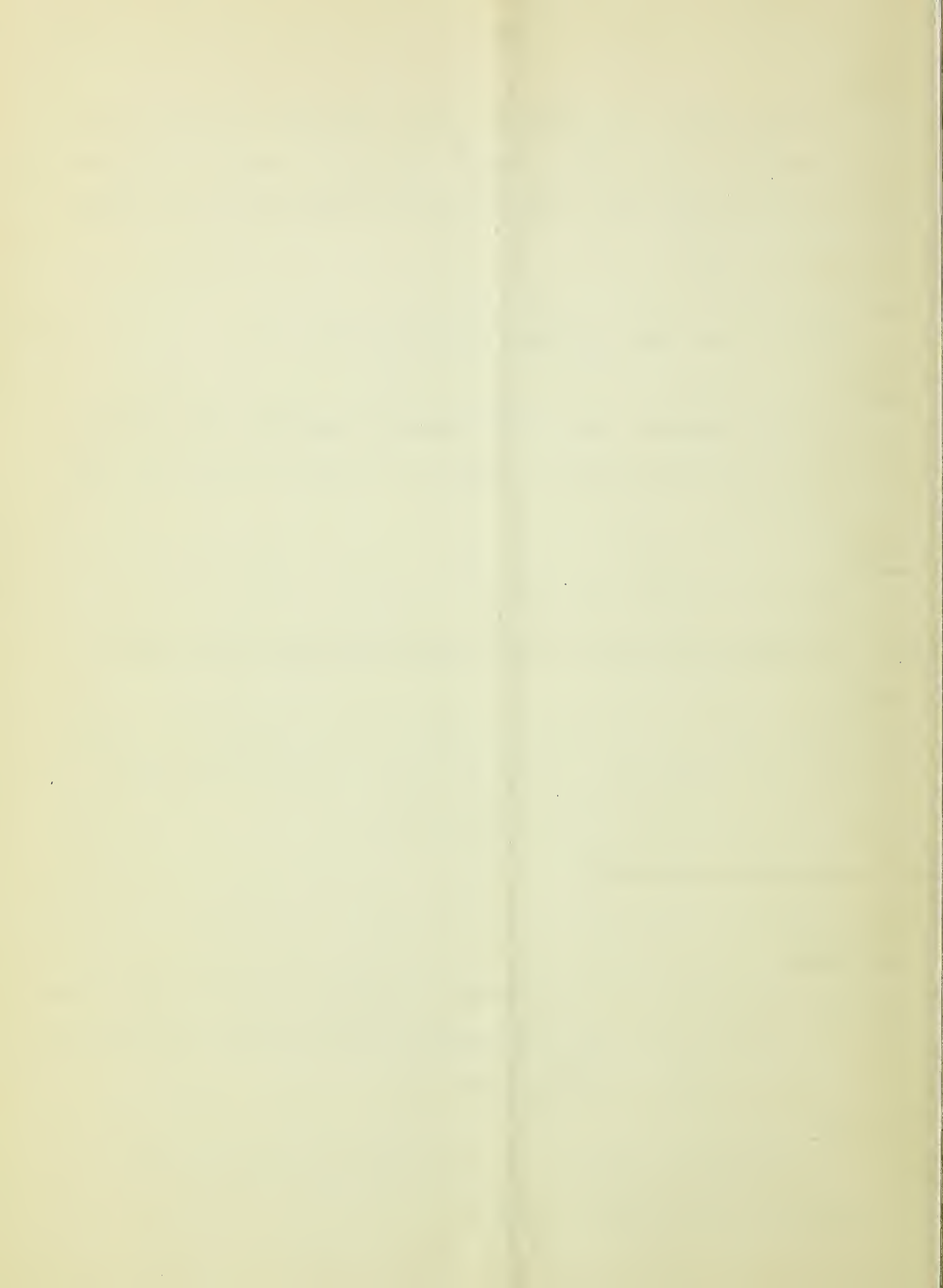
ORGAN: TREES.

ANNOUNCER

Muskegon County farmers far exceeded that first year's goal. More than 60 joined in the program, planting 150,000 white and red pine seedlings. And the following year....

PEARSON

Glad you dropped by, Adolph. Carl was just giving me a few pointers on how to plant a tree.



BARD

I hope you have as good luck as I had. My pines are growing just fine.

KNOFF

They are at that, Adolph. I don't think you need to worry about wind erosion on that field anymore, and some day you'll have a nice crop of timber.

BARD

You've got something here that's new, Pearson, these furrows.

PEARSON

Yes, that was Carl's suggestion.

KNOFF

You see, these are tiny trees, and we ought to give them every advantage and protection until they can take care of themselves. If it's at all possible, it's a good idea to plow shallow furrows, and plant the trees down in these furrows...

PEARSON

Just like they were along in the bottom of a small ditch.

BARD

I see.

KNOFF

The college has found out that this method gives at least 25 percent better results than any other method.

BARD

These furrows are about 7 feet apart, I'd judge.

KNOFF

That's about it. The trees are planted 6 feet apart in the furrows, and that gives around 1,000 trees to the acre. All right, Harry, suppose we get started.



PEARSON

All right, here's the first one.

KNOFF

I showed Richard Roest and John Kops this the other day. Now see...

SOUND: Spade plunged into soil.

KNOFF

Wedge open the soil with a spade. If you have a dibble, that's still better. Now make the cut deep enough so that the roots can be put straight down for their full length.

PEARSON

Here.

KNOFF

All right. Slide the roots down along the back of the spade. That's it. Put them down straight and deep. It ought to be about half an inch deeper than it grew in the nursery.

BARD

Say, you're turning into a real tree planter, Pearson.

PEARSON

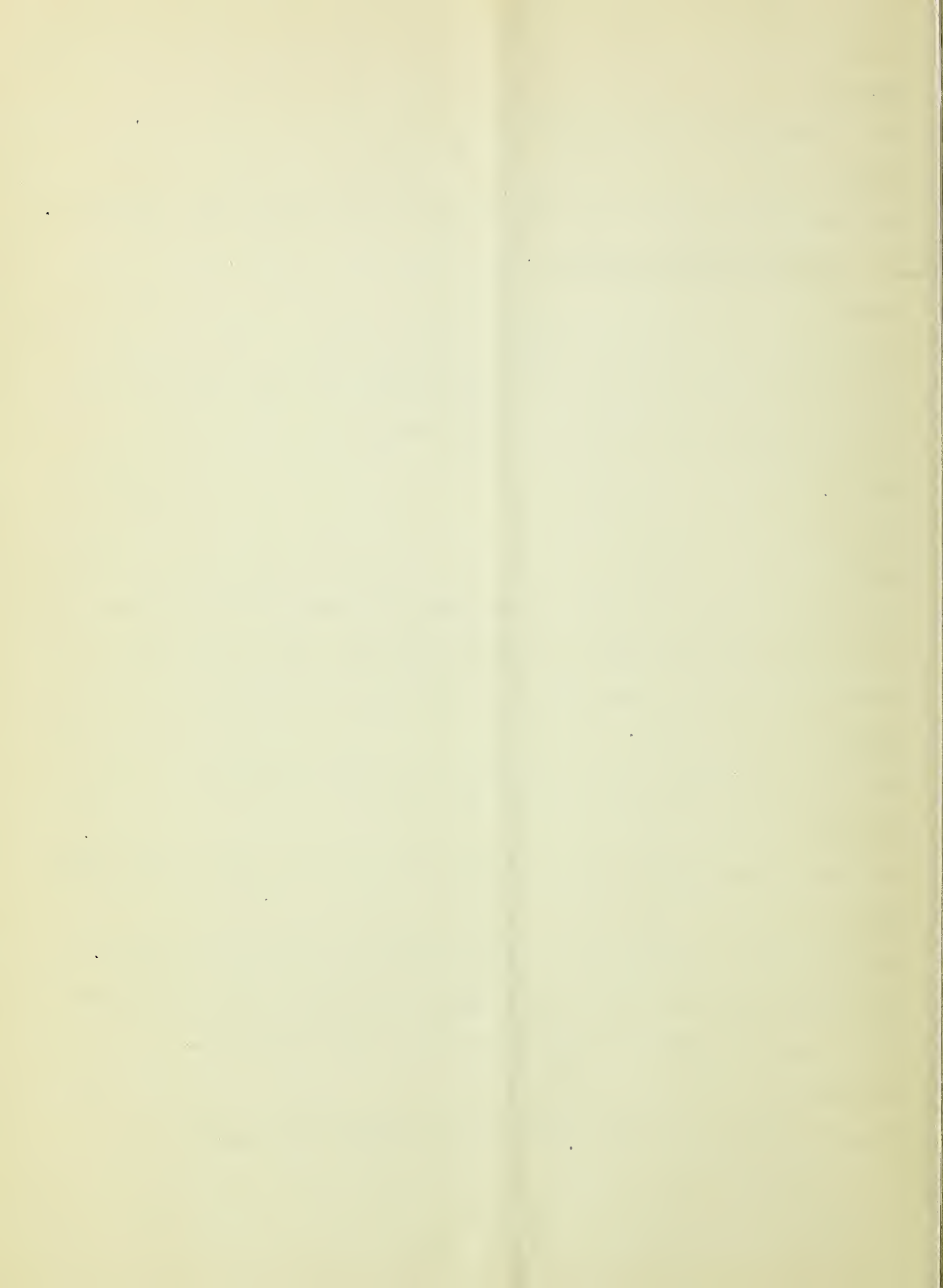
I ought to get plenty of experience from now on. What next, Carl?

KNOFF

Make another cut about three inches back of the first...there. Now shove the spade over so the soil is packed firmly, and stamp the ground a couple of times to fill in the second cut.

PEARSON

Why, I thought all along that tree planting was a job.



KNOPF

You can plant a tree in 60 seconds or less, and still do it well. But remember such little things--but important things--as never let the roots get dry. Handle and plant your trees carefully. And remember this. Land that was meant for cropland ought to be in crops. Land that is best suited for pastures ought to be in pastures. And land that was meant for trees ought to be in trees.

ORGAN: TREES.

ANNOUNCER

Thus has Muskegon County, Michigan, through its county agricultural agent and 4-H clubs, developed a reforestation program to stop wind erosion--a program that has brought results. Since 1925, farmers have planted almost two million seedlings. And each year, Muskegon County's agriculture assumes a more perfect balance, and this resort center and fruit market is taking definite steps to put an end to the nettling problem that faces much of western Michigan--wind erosion.

ORGAN: TREES.

ANNOUNCER

And now we turn to the Dayton office of the Soil Conservation Service for its weekly discussion, and here is Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thank you, _____. Well, we have that "robinia Pseudo-acacia" man with us once again, and from that broad smile on his face I can see that he's just itching to get up to the microphone and tell us all about pinus strobus, pinus sylvestris, and pinus resinosa...

GIBBS

Take your time, Ewing, take your time. I've got all day.



JONES

As a matter of fact, I've about exhausted my vocabulary of technical names for the forest family, but before we do call on you, Joe Gibbs, I think we ought to offer a few suggestions for tree planting. May we do that, _____?

ANNOUNCER

Why, certainly, Ewing. Will you do the talking?

JONES

No, in this case we'll let the printed word speak for itself. We've prepared a little leaflet which gives some helpful hints for tree planting. You know, when spring rolls around, thousands of farmers will want to set out trees, and this leaflet ought to be of value to them. It covers such items as preparation of the site to be planted, selection of adapted kinds of trees, and the actual method of planting.

ANNOUNCER

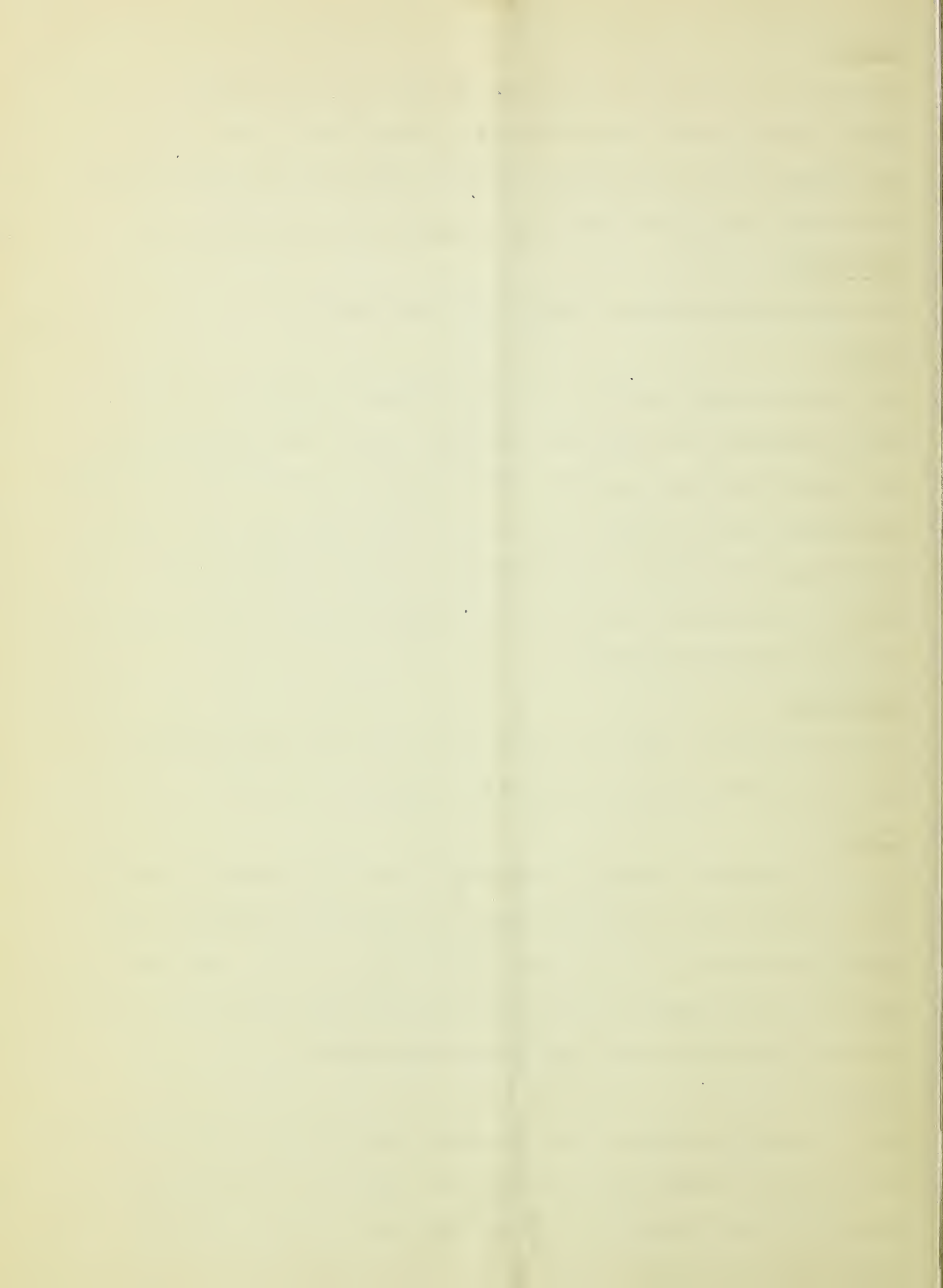
I know the rest. If you'd like a copy of the tree planting leaflet, write to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

JONES

And now, without further discussion, let's hear from Joe Gibbs. J. A. Gibbs, as many of you know, is regional forester for the Soil Conservation Service here in the Ohio Valley. The last time he was here he talked about black locust, and I know he'll forgive me for that crack about robinia pseudo-acacia.

GIBBS

Why, certainly, Ewing. And you were right when you intimated that I wanted to discuss the pine family. You know yourself that the pine trees are doing a lot to anchor some of those shifting sands along Lake Michigan.



JONES

You're right, Joe. The Michigan farmers are certainly to be commended for the efforts they have taken to stop wind erosion, and the encouraging part of it is that they've done so much on their own initiative.

GIBBS

Yes, not long ago we visited a fruit grower southwest of Lansing. He wasn't troubled so much by wind erosion, but he did find trees to be a protection against the wind. He planted a single row of pine windbreaks around his orchards. They range from 15 to 75 feet high now, white pine with some spruce.

JONES

And what does he have to say about them?

GIBBS

He told us that with his windbreaks he can spray his orchards on windy days--something he never could do before. And he says the pine and spruce trees protect his orchards from damage by wind. Apples aren't blown off the branches the way they used to be.

JONES

Well, those are both mighty important items in the rich fruit districts of Michigan. But getting back to the wind erosion problem...

GIBBS

I was getting back to that. Adolph Bard has one of the finest plantings to be seen anywhere in Michigan. Back in 1925, he planted ten acres of white and red pine. This planting on blow sand has been one of the most successful plantings in Muskegon County. Today, some of the trees are 15 to 20 feet high. And I don't blame Carl Knopf for being proud of this demonstration.



JONES

You know, the interesting thing about all this work is that these sand dunes aren't necessary at all. They can be controlled.

GIBBS

They certainly can, and more farmers are finding that out every year. For example, there's the J. L. Hirner farm...

JONES

Oh, yes...near Fennville.

GIBBS

Yes, down in the southwestern corner of the state. Mr. Hirner has a beautiful young pine forest on what was pure blow sand, and the sand has been completely stabilized. There's the Folt Estate, near Saugatuck...and we could go on and on telling about other farmers who have had success with their individual reforestation efforts. Nothing would please me more than for hundreds of still other farmers who are troubled with soil erosion, either by wind or water, to take your suggestion and write for the leaflet on tree planting.

JONES

I hope they do, and thanks a lot, J. A. Gibbs, for your encouraging report on what Michigan farmers are doing to prevent wind erosion. Next week, let's tell the story of Arthur Gore, an Indiana farmer who long ago found out how to build up his soils...with agricultural limestone.

SOUND: Whistling wind and blowing sand...

FIRST MAN

Well, I've gotta get home. I'll go with you as far as the mail box.



SECOND MAN

Fine, come on. It's awful hard to see through this sand.

FIRST MAN

Looks like it's getting worse every year. Blowing all the time.

SECOND MAN

Well, the sand on my farm is going to stop blowing. Well, here we are.

FIRST MAN

What's on that card, anyhow?

SECOND MAN

It's to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and it says, "Please send me the leaflet on tree planting."

ANNOUNCER

Next week, Agricultural Limestone.

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is a studio presentation of the Nation's Station.

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